

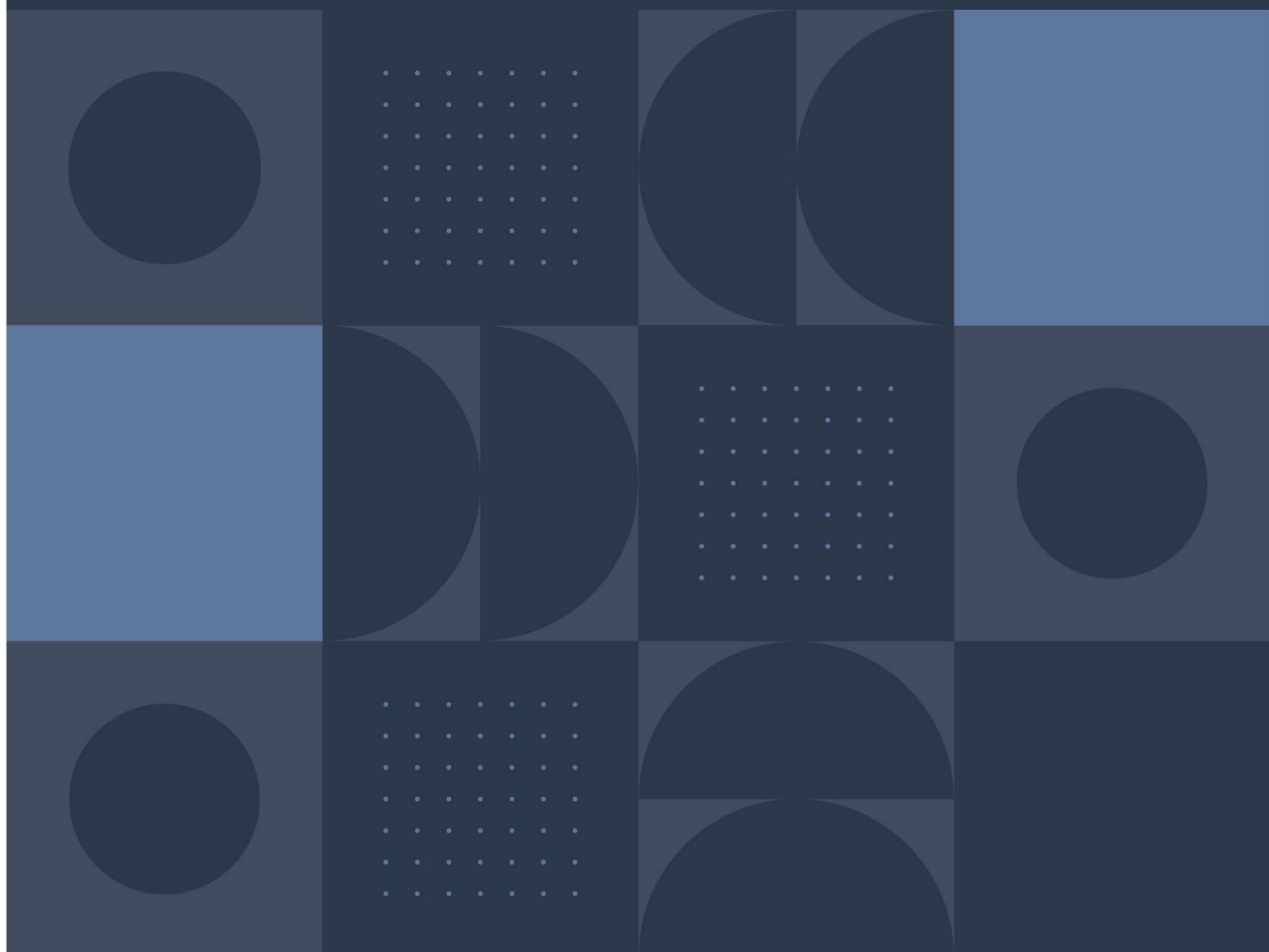


Australian Government  
The Treasury

Australian  
Centre for  
Evaluation



# Australian Centre for Evaluation Training and Capability Strategy



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*In the spirit of reconciliation, the Treasury acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

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## Executive Summary

### Vision for a service-wide evaluation capability uplift across the Australian Government:

The Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) will support Commonwealth entities to build the evaluation capabilities of their managers and staff. The ACE will do this through clear, relevant and focussed guidance, training and professional development opportunities. This will help the Australian Public Service (APS) to use evaluation evidence to deliver better policies and programs that improve the lives of Australians.

#### This Strategy aims to:

- Build **awareness of key evaluation approaches** and the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy
- Strengthen **system-wide training and supports** to build evaluation capability for different APS audiences
- Establish an **evaluative culture that supports learning**, innovation and better evaluation practice

#### Why we need a training and capability strategy

- More work is needed to build evaluation capabilities and embed an enduring culture of evaluation across the Australian Government.
- Keep pace with changes in how managers and staff access information and use guidance, training and professional development opportunities to build awareness, skills and expertise.
- Provide system-wide supports with flexibility for Commonwealth entities to tailor approaches to suit their needs and context.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for evaluation capability uplift in the Australian Government, with a focus on the network of in-house Commonwealth evaluation units and the ACE.

#### Our current state

- The ACE was established in 2023. Part of its mission is to oversee a system-wide evaluation capability uplift across the Australian Government.
- The Commonwealth Evaluation Policy, Toolkit and Profession have established strong foundations for building evaluation capability across government.
- The *State of Evaluation in the Australian Government 2025* found 61% of responding entities were engaging in some form of evaluation capability building. Common approaches included interagency knowledge sharing, training and practical on-the-job learning.
- All Agency Capability Reviews conducted by the APSC since 2023 (9 reviews as at August 2025) have found capability gaps in relation to review and evaluation.

#### Priorities and actions

##### 1 Good guidance

- 1.1 Develop new and enhanced guidance to mature the Evaluation Toolkit
- 1.2 Explore artificial intelligence capabilities to enhance ACE's digital products and tools

##### 2 Targeted training

- 2.1 Targeted and specialised training on priority areas for multiple audiences
- 2.2 Design and deliver 'train-the-trainer' support for Commonwealth evaluation units

##### 3 Professional networks

- 3.1 Continue to work with the Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group to develop specific resources that support system-wide evaluation capability uplift
- 3.2 Continue to facilitate engagement across sectors and jurisdictions

##### 4 On-the-job learning

- 4.1 Continue to use evaluation partnerships and projects with government entities to build capability
- 4.2 Pilot Senior Executive Service (SES) engagement program with ACE impact evaluation partners

# Introduction

The mission of the Australian Centre for Evaluation (ACE) is to help put evaluation evidence at the heart of policy design and decision-making throughout the Australian government.

As set out in the overarching ACE Strategy<sup>1</sup>, 4 streams of work seek to deliver on this mission:

1. evaluation leadership and promotion
2. impact evaluation delivery and advice
3. evaluation planning and use
4. evaluation capability building.

The purpose of this Training and Capability Strategy (the Strategy) is to outline the ACE's approach to building system-wide evaluation capability over the next 2 years, through to mid-2027. It provides further detail on how the ACE will deliver on the evaluation capability building work stream.

This Strategy aims to increase capability across the Australian Public Service (APS) to design, commission, deliver and use high-quality, ethical and culturally appropriate evaluation.

The Strategy is underpinned by 4 key principles:

- support the development of *multiple evaluation skills* (design, delivery and use)
- build capability through *multiple channels* (guidance, training and practical experience)
- use *targeted approaches* for different audiences (champions, commissioners and evaluators)
- deliver capability uplift to those who can provide *ongoing advice and support* (where possible).

Cross-agency collaboration, knowledge sharing and professional development are central to supporting a system-wide evaluation capability uplift. In September 2024, the Australian Public Service Commission announced the establishment of an Evaluation Profession. The role of the Evaluation Profession is to attract, develop and retain people interested in using evaluation evidence to drive outcomes of policies and programs. The Evaluation Profession will develop a complementary strategy that will be implemented in parallel with the ACE's broader work program.

In-house Commonwealth evaluation units play a critical role in strengthening evaluation practices and capabilities in their organisations. The ACE is working closely with these units to design and deliver more centralised supports, while also allowing the flexibility for individual entities to tailor approaches that work best for their context.

An 'evaluation roles and knowledge pyramid' outlines 4 primary target audiences for evaluation training and capability building in the APS (Figure 1):

- APS staff generally, who need a baseline understanding of evaluation approaches and concepts
- staff who commission evaluations and/or use evaluation findings
- evaluation champions—senior leaders (typically senior executive service level or equivalent) who promote, oversee and use high-quality evaluation
- staff who need the technical skills to design and deliver evaluations.

Each of these 4 groups require different evaluation knowledge and skills, as detailed in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The ACE's strategy is available at: <https://evaluation.treasury.gov.au/publications/australian-centre-evaluation-strategy>

Figure 1: Evaluation knowledge pyramid



Table 1: Evaluation knowledge pyramid: knowledge needs for different audiences

Role	Area of knowledge
All APS	Understanding of evaluative thinking, evaluation approaches, concepts and the role that evaluation evidence plays in informing policy design and delivery.
Commissioning and use of findings	Scoping an evaluation, developing program logics and evaluation questions, commissioning evaluation, managing contracts, responding to findings and using evaluation evidence.
Champions	Understanding and advocacy of the key components of robust evaluation planning, delivery and use.
Delivery	Designing a robust evaluation, collecting credible and reliable data, analysing and interpreting results, communicating findings and recommendations.

# Priorities and actions

The Strategy's priorities and actions are grouped under 4 interconnected streams of work—good guidance, targeted training, professional networks and on-the-job learning. A summary of these priorities and actions is mapped against the evaluation knowledge pyramid in Table 2.

**Table 2: Evaluation knowledge pyramid: summary of priorities and actions**

Role	Priorities and Actions
All APS	Enhanced guidance via the Evaluation Toolkit (Actions 1.1 and 1.2) Online training modules and microlearning videos (existing resources)
Commissioners and users	Initial training courses (Action 2.1) Train-the-trainer model delivered through evaluation units (Action 2.2) Resources developed with the Evaluation Reference Group (Action 3.1)
Champions	Pilot Senior Executive Service (SES) engagement program (Action 4.2) SES training delivered through the Data Profession (existing training)
Delivery	Targeted and specialised training courses (Action 2.1) Engagement and learning through professional networks (Action 3.2) On-the-job learning through impact evaluation projects (Action 4.1)

## 1. Good guidance

Access to good guidance on evaluation is critical to ensuring rigour and consistency in the way evaluation approaches and methods are used across the APS. This guidance is also essential in enabling Commonwealth entities to deliver fit-for-purpose evaluations, embed evaluation into everyday practice and improve the quality and impact of commissioned evaluations. The ACE provides guidance through the Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit.<sup>2</sup>

### Actions to support good guidance

**1.1 Develop new and enhanced guidance to mature the Evaluation Toolkit.** These new resources will be included in progressive updates to the ACE website. For example, in 2025 the ACE added guidance materials on economic evaluation, evaluation of pilots and evaluation governance. These progressive updates will allow the ACE to focus on evaluation areas with emerging interest and need across the APS.

**1.2 Explore artificial intelligence capabilities to enhance ACE's digital products and tools.** The ACE is exploring whether using artificial intelligence tools can help present the ACE website and toolkit in different formats and assist with navigating the available resources.

<sup>2</sup> The Evaluation Toolkit is available at: <https://evaluation.treasury.gov.au/>

## 2. Targeted training

All Commonwealth entities need to ensure that staff have the capability to engage with evaluation at the appropriate level. Different roles require different levels of training.

A substantial number of Commonwealth entities have established a dedicated evaluation unit or are in the process of doing so. These evaluation units are critical for the success of ACE's hub-and-spoke model, and especially for capability building and training. Where possible, capability building should be delivered by those who can provide ongoing advice and support to people planning and undertaking evaluations.

To date, the ACE has prepared a series of evaluation training modules and microlearning videos, available on APS Learn.<sup>3</sup> These are targeted at all APS staff to provide them with a foundational understanding of evaluation approaches and concepts. The ACE has also delivered specialist training sessions on commissioning and using impact evaluations.

### Actions to support targeted training

**2.1 Targeted and specialised training on priority areas for multiple audiences.** The ACE will offer training courses targeted at evaluation delivery, initially focused on the design and delivery of impact evaluations. Actions to strengthen SES training and promote evaluation training will also be delivered through the Evaluation Profession. The ACE will continue to consider other opportunities to make more specialised training available, particularly for those involved in delivering evaluations.

**2.2 Design and deliver 'train the trainer' support for Commonwealth evaluation units.** The 'train the trainer' support will provide staff in evaluation units with skills and resources to deliver evaluation training within their own entities.

## 3. Professional networks

Professional networks foster collaboration and strengthen relationships. Collaborating through professional networks enables knowledge generation and exchange, as well as shared learning across contexts and jurisdictions. The ACE supports or leads 3 professional networks:

- the Evaluation Profession, in partnership with the Australian Public Service Commission, which is open to government employees who have an interest in using evaluation, evidence and continuous improvement to drive outcomes of policies and programs<sup>4</sup>
- the Impact Evaluation Practitioners Network, which is a forum for public servants and researchers to discuss challenges and solutions related to planning and conducting robust impact evaluations<sup>5</sup>
- the Australian Public Sector Evaluation Network, a special interest group of the Australian Evaluation Society, which connects those working in evaluation in the public sector with non-government evaluators to share information and build capability.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The evaluation training modules are available at: [https://apslearn.apsacademy.gov.au/view\\_program/58](https://apslearn.apsacademy.gov.au/view_program/58)

<sup>4</sup> More information on the Evaluation Profession is available at: <https://community.apsprofessions.gov.au/professions/evaluationprofessionhome>

<sup>5</sup> More information on the Impact Evaluation Practitioners Network is available at: <https://evaluation.treasury.gov.au/learn-and-connect/impact-evaluation-practitioners-network>

<sup>6</sup> More information is available at: <https://www.aes.asn.au/special-interest-groups/aspen>



In addition, the ACE is a member of the National Indigenous Australians Agency's (NIAA) Indigenous Evaluation Committee. ACE also cultivates international connections through participation in meetings and events of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and currently acts as Chair for their Evaluation Expert Group. Finally, the ACE convenes an Evaluation Advisory Committee to foster strong connections between the ACE and the broader research community, advising on methodological and analytical approaches, and helping to raise the profile of ACE's work.

## Actions to support professional networks

**3.1 Continue to work with the Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group to develop specific resources that support system-wide evaluation capability uplift.** The ACE will continue to work closely and collaboratively with the Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group. This will enable the ACE to identify and deliver resources that strengthen entities' capability to improve the volume, quality and use of evaluation evidence.<sup>7</sup> This will include work on the Commonwealth Evaluation Maturity Model and guidance to support evaluation planning and evidence use in budget processes.

**3.2 Continue to facilitate engagement across sectors and jurisdictions.** The ACE will continue to provide leadership and support through broader sector and inter-jurisdictional networks.

## 4. On-the-job learning

The best way to build evaluation capability is through on-the-job involvement in commissioning, designing, delivering or using of evaluations. To date, the ACE has entered into impact evaluation partnerships with 4 Commonwealth departments and has undertaken impact evaluation projects with several more departments. These collaborative partnerships provide hands-on learning opportunities that increase capability.

### Actions to support on-the-job learning

**4.1 Continue to use evaluation partnerships and projects with government entities to build capability through hands-on experience.** The ACE will continue to work with government entities to build evaluation capability through its impact evaluation partnerships and projects. These partnerships and projects may involve various models of engagement including short-term secondments or cross-agency collaboration, facilitating connections with academic evaluation experts, and support for impact evaluation procurement.

**4.2 Pilot Senior Executive Service (SES) engagement program with ACE impact evaluation partners.** The ACE will pilot an SES engagement program in collaboration with impact evaluation partner agencies. The aim is to build strategic awareness and leadership support for evaluation by involving SES-level staff in targeted engagement activities that help to describe how to be an effective evaluation sponsor and champion.

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<sup>7</sup> More information on the Evaluation Reference Group is available at:

<https://evaluation.treasury.gov.au/sites/evaluation.treasury.gov.au/files/2024-06/erg-tor.pdf>

## Implementation

The timeframes for the delivery of ACE training and capability building initiatives are set out in Table 3. The timeframe for activities is either 'ongoing', for delivery in 2025-26 or delivery in 2026-27.

**Table 3: ACE training and capability building activities timeframes**

Action	Timeframe
1.1 Develop new and enhanced guidance to mature the Evaluation Toolkit	Ongoing
1.2 Explore artificial intelligence capabilities to enhance ACE's digital products and tools	2026-27
2.1 Targeted and specialised training on priority areas for multiple audiences	2025-26
2.2 Design and deliver 'train-the-trainer' support for Commonwealth evaluation units	2025-26
3.1 Continue to work with the Commonwealth Evaluation Reference Group to develop specific resources that support system-wide evaluation capability uplift	Ongoing
3.2 Continue to facilitate engagement across sectors and jurisdictions	Ongoing
4.1 Continue to use evaluation partnerships and projects with government entities to build capability	Ongoing
4.2 Pilot Senior Executive Service (SES) engagement program with ACE impact evaluation partners	2025-26